NUMB. CCCXXXIX.

The SPECTATOR.

Hi narrata ferunt alio: menſuraque ficti
Creſcit; & auditis aliquid novus adjicit auctor. Ov.

Thurſday, July 24. 1712.

OVID deſcribes the Palace of Fame as ſitu-ated in the very Center of the Univerſe, and perforated with ſo many Windows and Avenues as gave her the Sight of e thing that was done in the Heavens, in the Earth, in the Sea. The Structure of it was contri- in ſo admirable a manner, that it Eccho'd every which was ſpoken in the whole Compaſs of re, ſo that the Palace, ſays the Poet, was always with a confuſed Hubbub of low-dying Sounds, Voices being almoſt ſpent and worn out before rived at this General Rendevous of Speeches Whiſpers.

onſider Courts with the ſame regard to the tinents which they ſuperintend, as *Ovid*'s e of Fame, with regard to the Univerſe. The of a watchful Miniſter run through the whole e. There is ſcarce a Murmur or Complaint, does not reach his Ears. They have News-Ga- rs and Intelligencers diſtributed into their ſe- Walks and Quarters, who bring in their re- ive Quotas, and make them acquainted with Diſcourſe and Converſation of the whole King- or Common-wealth where they are Employ- The wiſeſt of Kings, alluding to theſe Inviſi- and unſuſpected Spies that are planted by Kings Rulers over their Fellow-Citizens, as well as thoſe Voluntary Informers that are buzzing a- the Ears of a great Man, and making their by ſuch ſecret Methods of Intelligence, has us a very prudent Caution: *Curſe not the King no in thy Thought, and Curſe not the Rich in thy chamber: For a Bird of the Air ſhall carry the and that which hath Wings ſhall tell the ter.*

s it is abſolutely neceſſary for Rulers to make of other Peoples Eyes and Ears, they ſhould particular Care to do it in ſuch a manner, that ay not bear too hard on the Perſon whoſe Life and Converſation are enquired into. A Man who is capable of ſo infamous a Calling as that of a Spy, is not very much to be relied upon. He can have no great Ties of Honour, or Checks of Conſcience, to reſtrain him in thoſe covert Evidences, where the Perſon accuſed has no Opportunity of vindicating himſelf. He will be more induſtrious to carry that which is grateful, than that which is true. There will be no Occaſion for him, if he does not hear and ſee things worth Diſcovery; ſo that he naturally inflames every Word and Circumſtance, aggravates what is faulty, perverts what is good, and miſrepreſents what is indifferent. Nor is it to be doubted but that ſuch Ignominious Wretches let their private Paſſions into theſe their clandeſtine Informations, and often wreak their particular Spite or Malice againſt the Perſon whom they are ſet to watch. It is a pleaſant Scene enough, which an *Italian* Author deſcribes between a Spy, and a Cardinal that employed him. The Cardinal is repreſented as minuting down every thing that is told him. The Spie begins with a Low Voice, Such an one, the Advocate, whiſpered to one of his Friends, within my hearing, that your Eminence was a very great Poultron; and after having given his Patron time to take it down, adds, that another called him a Mercenary Raſcal in a Publick Converſation. The Cardinal replies Very well, and bids him go on. The Spie proceeds, and loads him with Reports of the ſame Nature, till the Cardinal riſes in great Wrath, calls him an Impudent Scoundrel, and kicks him out of the Room.

It is obſerved of great and heroic Minds, that they have not only ſhewn a particular Diſregard to thoſe unmerited Reproaches which have been caſt upon 'em, but have been altogether free from that Impertinent Curioſity of Enquiring after them, or the poor Revenge of reſenting them. The Hiſtories of *Alexander* and *Cæſar* are full of this kind of Inſtances. Vulgar Souls are of a quite contrary Cha-

racter.

racter. *Dionysius*, the Tyrant of *Sicily*, had a Dungeon which was a very curious Piece of Architecture; and of which, as I am informed, there are still to be seen some Remains in that Island. It was called *Dionysius*'s *Ear*, and built with several little Windings and Labyrinths in the form of a real Ear. The Structure of it made it a kind of whispering Place, but such a one as gathered the Voice of him that spoke into a Funnel, which was placed at the very Top of it. The Tyrant used to lodge all his State Criminals, or those whom he suppos'd to be engaged together in any Evil Designs upon him, in this Dungeon. He had at the same time an Apartment over it, where he used to apply himself to the Funnel, and by that means over-hear every thing that was whispered in the Dungeon. I believe one may venture to affirm, that a *Cæsar* or an *Alexander* would rather have died by the Treason, than have used such disingenuous Means for the detecting of it.

A Man, who in ordinary Life is very Inquisitive after every thing that is spoken ill of him, passes his Time but very indifferently. He is wounded by every Arrow that is shot at him, and puts it in the Power of every Insignificant Enemy to disquiet him. Nay, he will suffer from what has been said of him, when it is forgotten by those who said or heard it. For this Reason I shou'd never bear one of those Officious Friends, that will be telling every malicious Report, every idle Censure that passes upon me The Tongue of Man is so petulant, and his Thoughts so variable, that one should not lay too great a stress upon any present Speeches and Opinions. Praise and Obloquy proceed very frequently out of the same Mouth upon the same Person, and upon the same Occasion. A generous Enemy will sometimes bestow Commendations, as the dearest Friend cannot sometimes refrain from speaking Ill. The Man who is indifferent in either of these respects, gives his Opinion at random, and praises or disapproves as he finds himself in Humour.

I shall conclude this Essay with Part of a Character which is finely drawn by the Earl of *Clarendon*, in the first Book of his History, which gives us the lively Picture of a great Man seizing himself with an absurd Curiosity.

'He had not that Application and Submission, and 'Reverence for the Queen, as might have been ex- 'pected from his Wisdom and Breeding; and often 'crossed her Pretences and Desires with more Rude- 'ness than was natural to him. Yet he was impertinently sollicitous to know what her Majesty said of 'him in private, and what Resentments she had towards him. And when by some Confidents, who 'had their Ends upon him from those Offices, he was 'informed of some bitter Expressions fallen from her 'Majesty, he was so exceedingly afflicted and tormented with the Sense of it, that sometimes by 'passionate Complaints and Representations to the 'King; sometimes by more dutiful Addresses and Ex- 'postulations with the Queen, in bewailing his Mis- 'fortune; he frequently exposed himself, and left his 'Condition worse than it was before, and the Eclair- 'cisment commonly ended in the Discovery of the 'Persons from whom he had receiv'd his most secret 'Intelligence.

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